

REMARKS

Applicants acknowledge the allowability of claims 1-4, 6-8 and 18, and the indication that claim 19 defines patentable subject matter and would be allowable if rewritten in independent form, including all limitations of the base claim 9 from which it depends.

By this Amendment, Applicants amend claims 9 and 20, and add new claims 22-23. Accordingly, claims 1-4, 6-14, and 16-23 remain pending in the application.

Reexamination and reconsideration are respectfully requested in view of the following remarks.

35 U.S.C. § 103

The Office Action rejected: claims 9-11 and 16-17 under 35 U.S.C. § 103 over Holmes et al. U.S. Patent 4,627,009 ("Holmes") in view of Kawashima U.S. Patent No. 5,955,739 ("Kawashima") and Staehle U.S. Patent 4,277,133 ("Staehle"); claims 12-13 under 35 U.S.C. § 103 over Holmes in view of Kawashima, Staehle, and Schram U.S. Patent 4,938,654 ("Schram"); claim 14 under 35 U.S.C. § 103 over Holmes in view of Kawashima, Staehle and An U.S. Patent 5,852,300 ("An"); and claims 20-21 under 35 U.S.C. § 103 over Nomura et al. U.S. patent 4,948,330 ("Nomura") in view of Kawashima.

Claim 9

Among other things, the inspection station of claim 9 includes at least one wafer stopper at a radius distance of a round portion of the semiconductor wafer from a central pivot of the semiconductor wafer for aligning the semiconductor wafer on the platform.

Applicants respectfully submit that no device including such feature is disclosed or suggested by Holmes, Kawashima, Staehle or any combination thereof.

At the outset, elements 34 and 36 in Staehle do not define a wafer stopper as recited in claim 1. Staehle merely shows a side clip 34 with an inserting peg 36 that

clips on top of a top surface of a slide 32, as clearly shown FIG. 1, for example. Indeed, the clip 34 in Staehele would be totally unsuitable for holding a semiconductor wafer onto a stage. Nor does anything at all in Staehele suggest a stopper disposed at an edge or radius distance of a slide - or certainly of a wafer!

Furthermore, Applicants respectfully submit that there is nothing in the prior art that would have motivated one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify Staehele's side clip 34 to be located at a radius distance of a round portion of the semiconductor wafer, instead of clamping down on a top surface, and then to incorporate Staehele's newly-modified clip into Holmes' microscope (as modified by Kawashima).

Accordingly, for at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that claim 9 is patentable over any proper combination of the cited references.

Claims 10-11 and 16-17

Claims 10-11 and 16-17 depend from claim 9 and are deemed patentable for at least the reasons set forth above with respect to claim 9.

Accordingly, for at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 10-11 and 16-17 are patentable over any proper combination of the cited references.

Claims 12-14

Claims 12-14 depend from claim 9. Applicants respectfully submit that neither Schram nor An remedies the shortcomings of Holmes, Kawashima, Staehele as set forth above with respect to claim 9.

Accordingly, for at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 12-14 are patentable over any proper combination of the cited references.

Claim 19

Claim 19 depends from claim 9 and is deemed patentable for at least the reasons set forth above with respect to claim 9.

Withdrawal of the objection to claim 19 is respectfully requested.

Claim 20

Among other things, the inspection station of claim 20 includes at least one wafer stopper at a radius distance of a round portion of the semiconductor wafer from a central pivot of the semiconductor wafer.

Neither Nomura, nor Kawashima, nor any combination thereof discloses or suggests an inspection station including such a feature.

Accordingly, for at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that claim 20 is patentable over any proper combination of the cited references.

Claim 21

Claim 21 depends from claim 20 and is deemed patentable for at least the reasons set forth above with respect to claim 20.

Accordingly, for at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that claim 21 is patentable over any combination of Nomura and Kawashima

NEW CLAIMS 22-23

New claims 22-23 depend from claims 9 and 20, respectively, and are deemed patentable for at least the reasons set forth above with respect to claims 9 and 20, respectively.

Allowance of claims 22-23 is therefore respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing explanations, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider and reexamine the present application, allow claims 1-4, 6-14, and 16-23, and pass the application to issue. In the event that there are any outstanding matters remaining in the present application, the Examiner is invited to contact Kenneth D. Springer (Reg. No. 39,843) at (703) 715-0870 to discuss these matters.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No.

50-0238 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or under 37 C.F.R. § 1.17, particularly extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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By: _____



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